



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
December 2017

# Los Padres National Forest

## *Land Management Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report for 2013*



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## Los Padres National Forest Stakeholders

I am pleased to present the Los Padres National Forest's fiscal year 2013 Monitoring and Evaluation Report. Included within the report is a summary of specific program accomplishments for the year, and evaluation of whether plans, projects and activities are implemented as designed and in compliance with the 2006 Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan (LMP).

The LMP emphasizes and identifies monitoring as a key element in all programs to assure the achievement of desired conditions over time. Recently implemented projects are monitored as well as ongoing activities, programs, and resource status. Through monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management, we aim to further increase management effectiveness and resource protection.

It is important to me to keep you informed of the results of our monitoring. If you are interested in becoming involved in a project or other planning activity, please see our national website <http://www.fs.fed.us/sopa/>. Additional information and opportunities on the Los Padres National Forest may be found on our Forest website <http://www.fs.usda.gov/lpnf/>.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Kenneth E. Heffner*

for

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Teresa Benson  
Forest Supervisor  
Los Padres National Forest

December 4, 2017

Date



United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Pacific Southwest Region  
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# Los Padres National Forest

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Sincerely,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
for Teresa Benson  
Forest Supervisor  
Los Padres National Forest

December 4, 2017

Date

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## Introduction

Monitoring is a means for confirming the sufficiency and adequacy of guidance in the Land Management Plan (LMP), and for tracking the status of and trends in changing resource conditions. It facilitates the process for adapting to change and documents the need to update, amend and eventually revise land management plans in order to achieve desired conditions while ensuring healthy National Forests exist for future generations. Monitoring requirements are found in all three parts of the LMP, and a summary of these requirements is located in Appendix C in Part 3 of the LMP.

Part 1 monitoring assesses resource conditions and movement towards desired conditions over the long-term. This is completed by measuring the change over time to environmental indicators and outcome evaluation questions identified in the LMP. The status of the trend relative to the desired resource condition serves as the basis for determining when a need for change in land management planning is indicated. Part 1 monitoring is completed at 5-year intervals, with the last assessment reported on June 15, 2012 for fiscal years (FY) 2006-2010.

Part 2 monitoring focuses on program implementation through accomplishments tracked in Forest Service corporate databases. The annual accomplishment indicators determine if the program areas are implementing the objectives and strategies established in Part 2 of the LMP.

Part 3 monitoring is conducted at the project or activity level in order to evaluate the effectiveness and application of design criteria established in the LMP. Projects that were completed or ongoing implementation in FY 2013 were selected for monitoring from representative functional areas and districts. Selected projects were then visited by an interdisciplinary monitoring team to review the application and effectiveness of the design criteria.

The FY 2013 LMP Monitoring and Evaluation Report documents the evaluation of selected projects and programs where activities occurred during October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013.

## Part 2 Monitoring

Monitoring identified in Part 2 of the Southern California Land Management Plan is focused on program implementation including inventory activities. The National Forests currently use attainment reporting for tracking program accomplishments as discussed in Part 2 of the LMP. The attainment measures are linked to the National Strategic Plan and report accomplishments through a national reporting system. Although the system will evolve over time as management needs change, Table 1 represents the type of measures that are currently reported on an annual basis. These attainments are a reflection of current budget and staffing.

**Table 1: FY2013 Accomplishments**

Indicator	Units	2013 Accomplishment
Acres of Terrestrial Habitat Enhanced	Acres	4900
Miles of Stream Habitat Enhanced	Miles	17
Acres of Noxious Weeds Treated	Acres	678



Acres of Vegetation Improved (also see Hazardous Fuels Reduction)	Acres	500
Acres of Watershed Improved	Acres	N/A*
Acres of Land Ownership Adjusted	Acres	120
Number of Heritage Resources Managed to Standard	Number	N/A*
Products Provided to Standard (Interpretation and Education)	Number	N/A*
Recreation Special Use Authorizations Administered to Standard	Number	130
PAOT Days Managed to Standard (Developed Sites)	PAOT Days	N/A*
Recreation Days Managed to Standard (General Forest Areas)	Days	N/A*
Land Use Authorizations Administered to Standard	Number	224
Number of Mineral Operations Administered to Standard	Number	75
Manage Grazing Allotments	Acres	88,582
Acres of Hazardous Fuel Reduction	Acres	3,126
Miles of Passenger Car Roads Maintained to Objective Maintenance Level	Miles	110
Miles of High Clearance & Back Country Roads Maintained to Objective Maintenance Level	Miles	50
Miles of Road Decommissioned	Miles	N/A*

\* Accomplishment indicator was not tracked for fiscal year 2013.

The indicators for interpretation and education products provided to standard, general forest areas recreation days managed to standard, and heritage resources managed to standard were not tracked in fiscal year 2013.

### Part 3 Monitoring

Implementation and effectiveness monitoring for Part 3 of the LMP is conducted at the project level, and is completed for new projects and ongoing activities and sites. A sample of projects and ongoing activities are selected, evaluated for compliance with the LMP, and visited by an interdisciplinary team (IDT) to review the application and effectiveness of design criteria. If the LMP design criteria are determined to be ineffective, then the IDT recommends possible corrective actions, and any required adjustments to the design criteria are documented in this report and updated in the LMP in accordance with Forest Service procedures.

The following questions are investigated for each reviewed project or ongoing activity:

- Is the project consistent with the LMP, and were LMP goals, desired conditions, and standards incorporated into the decision document?
- Were mitigations or design criteria identified from the LMP, consultations, and public input included in the decision, and implementation documents?
- Was the project implemented effectively?
- Were mitigations or design criteria effective?
- Were monitoring requirements identified and followed?

The following projects were chosen from a stratified sample of projects representing program areas and districts on the Los Padres National Forest. The LMP monitoring appendix calls for a 10% random

sample of new and ongoing projects. Technically, an ongoing project is one that is either implemented over a long span of time, a routine ongoing activity, or is part of a long term lease such as a range allotment, but which still requires NEPA for reauthorization. A new project is one which is planned, implemented, and completed within a recent period. Projects that are a simple renewal of a permit with no change in condition or permittee typically do not present the kinds of planning and implementation issues Part 3 monitoring is trying to monitor. Therefore, these kinds of projects are not included in the sample unless there is some kind of overriding resource issue that compels examination. The LPF typically has approximately 50 ongoing and new projects in any year, so the strategy is to select projects covering a range of program areas geographically distributed over the Forest. Hence, at least one project per District is selected while striving to have several major program areas represented.

**Table 2: Projects Selected for Review**

Ranger District	Project Name	Program Area	Documentation Reviewed
Santa Barbara	Santa Barbara Back Country Trail Maintenance	Public Use and Enjoyment	Decision Memo
Ojai	Whitestar Pipeline Relocation at Sespe Oil Field	Special Uses	Environmental Assessment; Decision Notice/FONSI
Monterey	Stone Ridge Trail Reroute Project	Public Use and Enjoyment	Decision Memo; CE Checklist; Plant Biological Evaluation; Wildlife Biological Assessment/Evaluation and Erratum; RNA Use Permit Application; Minimum Requirements Decision Guide
Santa Lucia	San Luis Obispo County Communication Site at Plowshare	Special Uses	Decision Memo; Special Use Permit; Communication Site Plan; Biological and Archaeological Evaluation
Mt Pinos	Frazier Mountain Vegetation Management Project	Fire and Aviation Management	Environmental Assessment; Decision Notice/FONSI



The Camuesa Connector Trail was overgrown and several water bars were replaced with rolling dips. The work was completed by volunteers from the Santa Barbara Mountain Bikers Trail Volunteers. This section of the trail is a popular mountain bike trail and the south end of the trail crosses the Santa Ynez River. There are known populations of late flowering mariposa lily (*Calochortus fimbriatus*) and umbrella larkspur (*Delphinium umbraculorum*) along the trail, both being Forest Service sensitive species. The trail crosses critical habitat for federally threatened California red-legged frog (*Rana draytonii*), as well as habitat for Forest Service sensitive southern western pond turtle (*Actinemys pallida*) and two-striped garter snake (*Thamnophis hammondi*). Finally, there are known archeological sites adjacent to the trail.

### **Monitoring**

This action was analyzed under a categorical exclusion and documented in a decision memo completed on May 30, 2012. The analysis of potential effects included review of the standard resource conditions that should be considered when determining whether a project can be categorically excluded from further documentation in an EA or EIS. No extraordinary circumstances were identified. The only mitigation identified in the decision memo was that there would be no work within arroyo toad (*Bufo californicus*) habitat (breeding or upland) and work performed along the streams with California red-legged frog (CRLF) breeding habitat (pools) would be done outside of the breeding season, so there would be no adverse impacts. In 2012, the Camuesa Connector Trail was surveyed for federally listed and Forest Service sensitive plant and animal species. Prior to project implementation, a spokesman for the volunteer group contacted Valerie Hubbartt, Santa Barbara District Resource Officer, inquiring as to any required resource mitigations related to wildlife, plants or archeology. Since the trail work was scheduled to occur outside the breeding season for CRLF, minimal vegetation clearing near riparian areas was needed. To further mitigation, the section of the trail crossing on the Santa Ynez River is located within a riffle section, rather than a pool (preferred CRLF habitat), and brush clearing occurred outside the flowering season for listed plants. Likewise, the District archeologist determined that trail work would not impact archeological sites and there were no avoidance areas. Trail work was completed in May of 2013.

A site visit to the trail was completed during the summer of 2013 while conducting work within the White Fire area and the trail was determined to be in good condition since it was brushed and rolling dips were installed resulting in a more sustainable trail. Late flowering mariposa lily and umbrella larkspur appeared to respond well to brush clearing since they are known to be disturbance followers.



This project supports Forest Goal 3.1 (Provide for Public Use and Natural Resource Protection) by providing recreation facilities that are safe and well-maintained, while also providing for the protection of natural resources. This project is consistent with the place-based program emphasis to "monitor threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate and sensitive species (listed species habitat and populations), protect cultural resources, and promote uses compatible with listed species." This project conforms to LMP direction Part 2, Transportation 3 - Improve Trails, including the following objectives:

- Construct and maintain the trail network to levels commensurate with area objectives, sustainable resource conditions, and the type and level of use.
- Maintain and/or develop access points and connecting trails linked to surrounding communities and create opportunities for non-motorized trips of short duration.

This project complies with design criteria related to wildlife and implementation of recreation activities (S11, S13, S25 and S34). In conclusion, trail work occurred outside of the breeding season for CRLF and minimal trail work was completed within riparian areas. Regular maintenance of the Camuesa Connector Trail will help to reduce erosion and siltation within streams, and assist in maintaining the surrounding habitat by keeping trail users within the trail border. Mitigations in the decision memo were executed as outlined.

Owing to the remote and steep location of the original Whitestar Pipeline, the line was subject to landslides and ruptures. In order to reduce the risk of a pipeline failure, in 2011, Seneca requested authorization to relocate the Whitestar Pipeline along existing roads and in an area that could be more easily monitored. The proposed action included construction of a new three-inch seamless steel welded pipeline extending 3,800 feet in length from the upper Whitestar wells to the Hansen/Whitestar treating facility.

Of the 3,800 feet of relocated line, 2,800 feet was constructed along existing roads and installed on pipe supports. The remaining 1,000 feet of relocated line was constructed across an area with chaparral and poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*). Pipe sections were welded together at a single site on the road. Then, from this highest point, the line was pulled with a cable beside an existing gas pipeline to the road below. A path approximately three feet wide was cleared by hand using shears, pruners, and saws along the upper 450 feet section. The lower 550 feet had a section open enough to allow the line to slide freely down to the road.

### Monitoring

The action was analyzed under a categorical exclusion and documented in a decision memo completed on November 17, 2011. The analysis of potential effects included review of the standard resource conditions that should be considered when determining whether a project can be categorical excluded from further documentation in an EA or EIS, and also included evaluation of noxious weed risk, management indicator species, and migratory bird species. No extraordinary circumstances were identified.

A special use permit was issued to Seneca Resources Corp. on December 5, 2011 to complete the requested actions. The special use permit provided for the relocation, operation, and maintenance of a three-inch oil pipeline connecting Whitestar wells to the Whitestar treating facility.

A field visit to Whitestar pipeline site was completed on April 11 2016. The line is located along a stable slope and along the shoulders of a road as proposed and authorized. The line is subject to daily monitoring and is maintained to standard as stipulated in the operation and maintenance plan.



### Conclusion

As described under Part 3, Appendix C, Goal 4.1a - Energy and Minerals Production of the LMP, the Forest has a role in contributing to an adequate and stable supply of mineral and energy resources while continuing to sustain the land's productivity for other uses and its capability to support biodiversity goals.

Based on the above, this project contributes to Goal 4.1 of the LMP - Administer Minerals and Energy Resource Development while protecting ecosystem health.

**Stone Ridge Trail Reroute Project****Project Description**

A 177-foot section of the Stone Ridge Trail near Goat Camp had a maximum grade of 55%, an average grade of approximately 35%, and was on loose, gravelly soil, making it unsafe for foot traffic. It was determined that a short trail reroute would be the best way to mitigate the safety hazard. The replacement section would be approximately 366 feet long, would have a maximum grade of no more than 30%, an average grade of approximately 20%, and would deviate from the existing route by approximately 175 feet to the west. The endpoints of the existing section of trail would be disguised, and its surface would be scarified and allowed to revegetate naturally. This action would bring the trail section into compliance with the design grade guidelines in FSH 2309.18 for Class 2 hiker/pedestrian trails. The reroute would be undertaken in the context of a larger ongoing maintenance project, and the rerouted portion of the trail would be constructed to the same standard as the adjacent existing trail segments.

**Monitoring**

Environmental review was conducted to evaluate the effects of the proposed trail reroute in order to determine if there were extraordinary circumstances that would preclude the use of a categorical exclusion for the project. Informal consultation with the North Zone Archaeologist on February 27, 2012 uncovered no archaeological concerns, based on negative results from a previous archaeological survey in the area and the fact that the proposed trail segment was on very steep



topography. On June 13, 2012 the action area was intensively surveyed by qualified botanists, and no federally threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate (TEPCS) plant species were found. From geographic information system (GIS) data and the findings of the botanical survey it was determined that no management indicator species (MIS) would be affected by the trail reroute. It was also determined that the only TEPCS wildlife species that could potentially be affected by trail reroute would be the California legless lizard (*Anniella pulchra*), and that any effects would not likely contribute to a trend toward federal listing of the existing population of the California legless lizard. Since the project was within the Cone Peak Gradient Research Natural Area (RNA), a use permit application was submitted to the Pacific Southwest Research Station; the RNA use permit was granted on September 25, 2012 (with an extension of time to implement on January 11, 2013). Since the project was within the Ventana Wilderness, a minimum requirements analysis (involving no Wilderness Section 4(c) uses) was prepared; this received line officer approval on December 5, 2012. Collectively, the above analyses were deemed sufficient to support a conclusion of no extraordinary circumstances, and a Decision Memo was signed on February 19, 2013. Work on the reroute began on February 27, 2013 and was completed on March 4, 2013.

The project site has been visited numerous times since the completion of the reroute by solitude monitoring interns and by volunteer wilderness rangers. The rerouted trail is reported to be holding up well, with no significant erosion and no issues other than normal sloughing and chaparral regrowth.

During the first year after the reroute was completed, a noticeable amount of tecolote (*Centaurea melitensis*), a non-native invasive weed, which had been found during the pre-work botanical survey, was observed in the bare soil adjacent to the trail. In subsequent years the tecolote was largely replaced as native vegetation took hold in the disturbed areas. High-resolution Google Earth photos from April and August 2013 illustrate the progress of revegetation of the disturbed areas adjacent to the trail and of the abandoned trail segment that was replaced.

## Conclusion

This project supports Forest Goal 3.1 by providing recreation facilities that are safe and well-maintained, while also providing for the protection of natural resources. The project is consistent with the place-based program emphasis to "improve trail maintenance while protecting areas of cultural and biological significance and resolving conflicts between users and resources." The project conforms to plan direction that "trail planners emphasize providing loop trails and connecting trails to enhance trail opportunities and minimize resource damage", supporting the program strategy Trans 3 – Improve Trails.



Verizon wireless requested a special use permit to install, maintain, and use a generator to provide back-up power to their existing facilities at Plowshare Peak. They also requested permission to remove two unused diesel fuel tanks, and replace them with one new tank. Under their proposal, Verizon Wireless would install the new generator on an existing concrete pad adjacent to the building containing their improvements.

### **Monitoring**

This action was analyzed under a categorical exclusion and documented in a decision memo completed on January 27, 2012. The analysis of potential effects included review of the standard resource conditions that should be considered when determining whether a project can be categorically excluded from further documentation in an EA or EIS, and also included evaluation of noxious weed risk, management indicator species, and migratory bird species. No extraordinary circumstances were identified.

A special use permit was issued to Verizon Wireless on April 24, 2012 to complete the requested actions. The special use permit provided for the continued use and maintenance of the generator and replacement fuel tank for a 10-year term. The permit included an authorization from Santa Barbara County Air Pollution control district for generator emissions, and operation and maintenance plan that stipulated resource protection measures and fire prevention measures in accordance with Appendix G in the LMP.



A field visit to Plowshare Peak was complete on September 11, 2013. The generator and fuel tank are located behind the American Tower facility as proposed and authorized, and are of sufficiently dark coloring to conform to the Plowshare Peak Communication Site Plan. The area surrounding the generator is clear of vegetation, trash, and orderly as stipulated in the operation and maintenance plan.

### **Conclusion**

The project occurs within a designated communication site and abides by the site restrictions and design criteria as described in the LMP. This project contributes to Forest Goal 7.1 by supporting facilities that serve public needs, while co-locating facilities and minimizing the number of acres encumbered by special use authorizations.

## ***Frazier Mountain Vegetation Management Project***

### **Project Description**

The Frazier Mountain Vegetation Management project is located in Kern and Ventura Counties, California on the Mt. Pinos Ranger District (MPRD), southeast of the intersection of Lockwood Valley and Frazier Mountain Park Roads. The nearest community is Frazier Park, approximately 4-5 miles northeast. The project ranges in altitude from ca. 5500 – 8000 feet above mean sea level and comprises approximately 2,850 acres of coniferous forest, woodlands and shrublands, with some areas including hardwood forest, and herbaceous and barren cover. The treatment block locations include T8N, R19W, Sections 7 and 18; and T8N, R20W, Sections 4, 8, 9 through 16, 22, 23, 27, and 28. The Frazier Mountain Vegetation Management project aims to reduce fire hazard risk, maintain health of mature conifer stands and existing conifer plantations, and protect existing facilities from wildfire, including, high value recreation areas, campgrounds, trail heads, special-use dwellings and the MPRD building and warehouse complex.

### **Monitoring**

Noncommercial thinning of understory trees up to 10" diameter, mastication and fuels treatments are used to reduce tree density and fuel loading in mixed conifer forests, remove ladder fuels and forest floor fuel accumulations, reduce fuel loading in chaparral adjacent to fir stands, create fuelbreaks along roads and ridgetops to limit the spread of wildland fire, and thin conifer stands to prevent water stress and damage by bark beetles. Snags and desirable species of sufficient size are left to create a visually desirable stand that is accessible to animals and humans while providing for species diversity. The track-mounted hydraulically-operated masticators move through the stands while chopping the standing vegetation to a mulch-like layer as deep as 6-12 inches in places while leaving little damage to the ground or to the remaining standing trees. Continued monitoring takes place for any initial outbreak of sudden oak death, *Phytophthora ramorum*, so that identification of an outbreak may be controlled and limit spread. OHV trespass activities are routinely monitored in areas where treatments were performed, and signage and barrier installations are used to discourage misuse.

This project was analyzed in an Environmental Assessment (EA) on January, 2012. The Decision Notice (DN) included a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and design criteria for the following resource areas: silviculture, fuels/air quality, heritage, recreation, scenery, noxious weeds, wildlife, botany, threatened and endangered plants, watershed, and soils.

### **Conclusion**

The Frazier Mt Project is consistent with the Southern California Forests Vision (Part 1), the Los Padres National Forest Strategy (Part 2) and the Design Criteria for the Southern California National Forests (Part 3).

The Southern California National Forests Vision (USDA 2005a) includes the following goals:



- Goal 1.1 - Community Protection (USDA 2005a, p. 20). Improve the ability of southern California communities to limit loss of life and property and recover from the high intensity wildland fires that are a natural part of this State's ecosystem.
- Goal 1.2 - Restoration of Forest Health (USDA 2005a, p. 21). Restore forest health where alteration of natural fire regimes has put human and natural resource values at risk.
- Goal 1.2.1 - Fire Regime I (0-35 years - low severity) (USDA 2005a, p. 23). Reduce the potential for widespread losses of montane conifer forests caused by severe, extensive, stand replacing fires.

## **LMP Amendments**

The LMP is a dynamic document that can be amended in response to:

- Errors and or discrepancies found during implementation;
- New information;
- Changes in physical conditions;
- New laws, regulations, or policies that affect National Forest management;
- New guidance indicated by application of adaptive management principles.

Significant LMP amendments change guidance or management zoning which, because the LMP is a NEPA document, requires NEPA. This is completed through a project-level NEPA decision that requires an LMP amendment to make the project consistent with the LMP, or directly in a supplemental EIS. Non-significant changes not requiring NEPA include corrections; clarification of intent; changes to monitoring questions; and refinements of management area boundaries to correct GIS inaccuracies. These are simply updates that are posted to the LMP and made public through such means as publishing on the Forest website, as is the case for this document. From the evaluation of monitoring results no amendments are needed.

## **Public Participation**

The 2013 Los Padres National Forest Land Management Plan Monitoring and Evaluation Report is posted on the Forest website.

## **List of Contributors**

The following individuals participated in the completion of this report either as Part 2 contributors of program area assessments, or as team members in Part 3 project field reviews:

Adam Furlow  
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